

*College of Surgeons - with the  
author's respect*

# RACE-HORSES

PAST AND PRESENT.

SIX LETTERS,

BY

I. F. *Raimondi*.

Second Edition.

LONDON:

WILLIAM G. BENNING AND CO., 43, FLEET-STREET.

WILLIAM WALKER, 196, STRAND.

---

1857.

*Price One Shilling.*

# CONTENTS.

---

## LETTER I.

	PAGE
Long Distances and Heavy Weights in Races of former times —Statute Weights—Royal Plates—First Race for Three- year-olds, in 1731—Match over Twelve Miles . . . . .	3

## LETTER II.

Remarks on Discouragement of Long Distances and High Weights—Real Promoters and Supporters of the pursuit .	12
--	----

## LETTER III.

Proposed Remedy for restoring Long Distances—Regard of the English people for good Horses . . . . .	15
--	----

## LETTER IV.

Proposed Match over Six Miles, carrying 12st., as in 1748— Numerous Entries—the cause of the Betting System, and its evils . . . . .	18
--	----

## LETTER V.

No Horses of the present day able to run for Royal Plates under their former Conditions—Short Career of Two-year- olds . . . . .	23
--	----

## LETTER VI.

Diminished Races over Four Miles during the last Half Cen- tury—Determination of Parliament, in 1740, to encourage the breed of strong Horses—Suggestion to give Medals for winning Royal Plates, when restored to their former Con- ditions . . . . .	28
--	----

# SIX LETTERS,

WRITTEN, DURING THE PAST YEAR, TO THE EDITOR OF THE  
“MORNING POST” NEWSPAPER, IN WHICH THEY APPEARED,  
UNDER THE TITLE OF “*HORSE-RACING AT NEWMARKET.*”

---

## LETTER I.

---

SIR,

As the following may be interesting to some of your readers, probably you will give insertion to it on a favourable opportunity offering:—In the year 1709, September 13th at York, the Gold Cup value £50 was run for by horses six years old, carrying 12st. each four-mile heats; this was won at three heats. On the following day, a Plate of £40, four-mile heats—no weights or ages are mentioned; but the race was won after four heats. On the 15th, a Plate of £10, four-mile heats—no weights or ages are mentioned; this was won at three heats, the latter a dead heat; but the riders being guilty of foul play in running, and afterwards fighting on horseback, the plate was given to the owner of the horse who was third. In 1710, the Gold Cup at York value £60, for six-year-olds, 12st.

each, four-mile heats, was won at three heats. In 1711, at York, her Majesty Queen Anne's Gold Cup, value 100 gs., for six-year-olds, 12st. each, four-mile heats, was won at two heats by Mr. Hall's Sampson. In 1712, 1713, and 1714, the like prizes, with several of less value, were run for,—all four-mile heats. On the 30th of July 1714 at York, her Majesty Queen Anne's horse Star won a Plate at four heats, which appears as follows in the *Racing Calendar Abridged*, 1829:—

Tuesday, the 30th of August.—A Plate of £40, for aged Horses,  
11 st. each; four mile heats.

Her Majesty Queen Anne's b. h. Star	.	.	.	4	3	1	1
The Lord Chamberlain's ch. h. Merlin	.	.	.	1	2	3	2
Hon. Mr. Cecil's ch. h. Creeper	.	.	.	2	1	2	3
Mr. Bouchier's b. g. Harmless	.	.	.	3	4	4	0
Sir W. W. Blackett's ch. h. Squirrel	.	.	.	5	5	5	0

Three others were distanced at the first heat.

These distances and weights were the rule, and scarcely an exception is to be found. At Newmarket, beginning with 1718, where matches were run, the distance was four miles, though the weights were less than for plates; the sums ran for ranging from 100 gs. to 500 gs. In 1719 there was a match for 200 gs., 10st. each, six miles. At Hambleton, in Yorkshire, in 1719, his Majesty's Gold Cup for five-year-old mares, 10st., four miles, 31 started. At Newmarket, in April, in the same year, the Duke of Rutland's Coneyskins won the King's Plate, of 100 gs., for six-year-olds, 12st. each, four-mile heats, at three heats, beating four others. The Duke of Devonshire's

Basto mare beat Mr. Frampton's Nutmeg, 8st. 6lbs. each, eight miles, 150 gs. To show the determination to encourage long distances, the Duke of Wharton's Coneyskins, 11st. 10lbs., was matched against Lord Hillsborough's Speedwell, 12st., twelve-mile heats, 1,000 gs.; but this match was drawn. In 1720, at Newmarket, there is a match, distance only *one mile*. But the next race is between Lord Hillsborough's Winchenton, which beat Lord Drogheda's Beelzebub, 8st. 3lbs. each, eight miles, 200 gs. This distance might in these days be considered extreme and hard, if not cruel, towards the horse; but it should be remembered that it is only horse against horse, and not horse against time. In 1722, April the 5th, at Newmarket, Mr. Panton's Cub beat Lord Drogheda's Snip-mare, 9st. each; five miles, 3,000 gs. On the 22nd of October, the Duke of Devonshire's Childers, 7 years old, beat Lord Drogheda's Chanter, 12 years old, carrying 10st. each; six miles, 1,000 gs.; and Mr. Cotton's Fox, 9st. 12lb., beat Lord Drogheda's Snip-mare, 8st. 5lb., six miles, 200 gs. It is singular that in the following year, 23rd March, 1723, Fox, carrying 10st., again beat the Snip-mare, carrying 8st.; eight miles, 300 gs. Lord Drogheda's unlucky, but plucky, Snip-mare makes her appearance again, on the 21st of April, for another race of eight miles, carrying 8st. 7lbs., but is beat by Mr. Panton's Molly, carrying 10st., 300 gs. In 1724, October 9th, at Newmarket, Lord Halifax's Red Robin and Lord W. Manners's Venus, 10st. each, six miles, 100 gs., ran a dead heat; which being the very end and object of a



match, was complimentary to the judgment and skill of both parties in matching, considering the distance. We come now to a heavy weight. On the 12th of October of that year, Major Walborough's g. beat Colonel Norton's g., 15st. each, four miles, 40 gs.

The long course is again in use, and with heavier weights. On the 23rd March, 1727, Miss Witty, carrying 11st., beat Bay Wilkinson, 12st., eight miles. During this period, at the country or provincial races, the weights, with few exceptions, were heavy, and the distances long; all the royal plates being four-mile heats, with one or two exceptions. In 1728, at Newmarket, a match over the eight-mile course is run, weights 9st. each. At York, the King's Plate was won by Mr. Alcock's Spot, by his Arabian, at two heats, beating four others, weights 12st., four-mile heats. At the same races, the Ladies' Gold Cup, value £60, for five-year-old horses, 10st. each, four miles, was won by Mr. Meynell's gr. h. Badger, by D'Arcy's Counsellor, which was by a son of the Shaftesbury Turk, beating nine others. Badger was so much superior to his antagonists, that his rider, John Craggs, pulled him quite up, and walked round the turn post, after which it is supposed he could have distanced them all. In 1729, as a check upon superior horses winning the prizes in the provinces, it was made a condition that the winner should be sold for a certain sum; this was adopted at Andover and Peterborough. At Bedale in Yorkshire, in 1731, appears the first prize for *three*-year-olds, carrying 8st. each, no distance mentioned. At Newmarket, in

September, there were two races, distance six miles, weights 10st. in one, and 8st. in the other.

We now come to a match at Newmarket, where, on the 7th of April, 1732, Mr. Hutchins's mare, carrying 7st. 5lbs., beat Mr. Levin's mare, 7st. 14ozs., twelve miles.

In 1739, Dismal, a son of the Godolphin Arabian, won the King's Plate at Guildford, at four heats, of four miles each, beating Blaze, Spectre, Careless, and others. Dismal won the King's Plate, in the same year at Salisbury, beating Lord Weymouth's Fig, and the Duke of Bolton's Hopeful, four heats, four miles each.

At this time, a prejudice had grown up against Barbs, Turks, and Arabian horses; notwithstanding which, they were much bred from in the racing studs.

In 1740, the number of races at Newmarket was much diminished. In the Spring meetings there were only four races, including the two Royal Plates. The Legislature complaining at this time that the great number of horse races for small plates, prizes, and sums of money, had contributed very much to the encouragement of idleness, to the impoverishment of the meaner sort of the subjects of the kingdom, and that the breed of *strong and useful horses had been much prejudiced thereby*, made it penal to run for less than £50; and fixed the weights for five-year-olds at 10st.; six at 11st.; and seven at 12st.

There was, however, an exception in favour of Newmarket and Black Hambleton, at which places matches might be run, for any sum; probably this

indulgence was in consideration of the number of horses assembled for training and running, and that racing was carried on as it should be, in these places.

Now, with regard to that part of the preamble which states that the breed of strong horses had been much prejudiced: it is worthy of remark, that as many of the great races, including Royal Plates, with their heavy weights and four-mile heats, at Newmarket and other places, were won by the progeny of the Arabian, Turk, Barb, and other foreign horses (some of the Royal stud at Hampton Court) as by any others. Take, for instance, the grey horse Dismal:—he is by the Godolphin Arabian, dam by the Alcock Arabian—Curwen Bay Barb—natural Barb mare.

After the passing of the Act of 1740, the number of races diminished throughout the country,—but they were all for £50 or upwards—and the horses carried the heavy weights fixed by the statute; and the long distances at Newmarket, York, and other important places, were continued until the year 1747, when the Legislature again interfered,—and after stating that the thirteen Royal Plates of 100 gs. each, and the high prices constantly given for horses of *strength and size* were sufficient to encourage breeders to raise their cattle to the *utmost size and strength possible*; enacted that any race for £50 value or upwards might be run for at any weights.

In consequence of this enactment, the weights were lighter in many places, but in others the heavy weights were still adhered to. On the 11th of April,



1748, at Newmarket, Mr. Haydon's Bajazet, by the Godolphin Arabian, beat Mr. Rogers's Babraham, 12st. each, six miles 50 gs. Two more of the progeny of the Godolphin Arabian won races there, viz. Slug, the King's Plate, carrying 12st., four mile heats; and Blank, a match carrying 9st., three miles.

On the 6th of October, 1749, Lord March's ch. g. beat the Duke of Hamilton's bl. g., 8st. 7lbs. each, four miles, 500 gs.; and Lord March's Whipper-in beat Lord Eglinton's dun horse, 12st. each, four miles, 500 gs. The last race at Newmarket in the year 1750, is in the *Abridgment* as follows:—

Oct. 5.—A Plate of 85 gs., for Four-year-olds, 8st. 7lb. each,  
Beacon Course.

Lord Portmore's gr. c. Skim, by Starling	(T. Marshall)	1
Mr. Martindale's gr. c. Augustus (afterwards Archer), by The Bolton Starling, dam by the Bald Galloway		2
Duke of Ancaster's gr. c. Magic		3
Lord Godolphin's b. c. Chub, brother to Noble, by the Godolphin Arabian		4
Lord Gower's b. f. Little Witch		5
Mr. Wright's bl. f. Gipsy, by Blaze		6
Mr. Blake's b. f.		7

As the reader's patience must by this time be nearly exhausted; a flying leap is taken over one hundred years, and as many Racing Calendars, to the year 1850,—when the revolution in horse-races appears really startling! Thirty-six races out of thirty-seven at Newmarket, up to the year 1750, were four miles or upwards; but at the same place in 1850 only one race out of twenty-five is four miles! Full allowances must be made for younger horses running now

than did a century ago, which warrants shorter distances and light weights; but why should not horses of five and six, run the longer distances with high weights as a rule, and not as an exception? Even for the Royal Plates, horses of full age *now* carry what the four-year-olds carried formerly,—that is, nearly two stone less! and the weights for younger horses are reduced in proportion. The distances for the Royal Plates *now* are little more than half what they were; heats are abolished, and there is only one Royal Plate where the distance is four miles—the others being two miles or three miles, but no heats.

Now, an ordinary man has a right to ask whether the race horses of this day are better than those of a century back. Can he be told that they are? and that they have so securely attained the climax of perfection during the past century, that they may be *now* safely indulged with less weight and distance,—and in fact do only half their old work? Or is it not a fact that they are not so good?—Although there is a growing dislike to long distances, which looks like cowardice; there is, it is hoped, still at Newmarket a blushing reluctance to abandon them entirely. It must be admitted that there was an interesting race R. C. for her Majesty's plate, in Oct. 1850, and carrying high weights for these days; which leaves hopes that long distances might be restored. Why not revive the last race at Newmarket of 1750, and, in memory of the nobleman who won it, call it the "Portmore" Plate; and have

R. C. races for three-year-olds *only*, and B. C. races for four-year-olds *only*, and for five-year-olds and upwards, in *every meeting* including July?

I. F. R.

*January 3, 1856.*

Among the owners of race-horses in the above period ending 1750, are the following ladies:—Mrs. Betty Saville, Lady Gainsborough, Lady Lowther, Lady Chaplin, Lady Maxwell, Miss Betty Routh, Lady Coningsby, Miss Judith Routh, Miss Dolly Routh, Miss Christina Fagg, Miss Jenny Routh, Miss Leigh, Miss Stuart, and Miss Mayes.

## LETTER II.

---

SIR,

FEELING obliged by your ready insertion of the long statement and letter which appeared in your paper of the 4th inst., and being desirous of saying a little more on the subject of the distances run in races at Newmarket; I trespass again on your notice by making the following statement, to show how much more encouragement is now given to short, rather than to long courses.

During the last year, was given by, or under the direction of, the Jockey Club, upwards of £3,000 in money, at Newmarket;—being for plates, or in augmentation of other sums run for. This large sum was distributed into 44 separate prizes. Now, out of these separate sums, *ten* were for the winners of races not exceeding three-quarters of a mile, *eight* for races of one mile, *fifteen* for races under a mile and three-quarters, *seven* for races of two miles, *three* for races of between two and three miles, only *one* for a race of three miles and a half, but not a shilling for races of four miles, or the renowned Beacon Course.

Now, might not the Jockey Club, with their



wonted liberality and regard for fairness, revise and redistribute these donations ; and give equal encouragement to horses of all qualities ; and, if any preference be shown, give the larger sums to those whose horses win over the longer distances ?

It is almost sickening to see horses of four, five, and even six years old and upwards perpetually engaged to run that *baby* two-year old course, which sufficiently of itself describes the animals it was intended for : but won too often by horses which have the advantage in start and stride. Such races are little else than baits thrown out for betting purposes ; as to trying or proving the qualities of the horses,—three-quarters of a mile can answer no beneficial or racing purpose, except for two-year-olds.

The original reason for giving Royal Plates has virtually expired,—as these races are now little more than ordinary races, and call for nothing beyond.

Some of the favourite sires of the race-horses of the present day, never ran so far as three miles in public ; and never saw the inside of the four-mile stables ! Surely some spirited individuals, in case the Jockey Club should not take the matter up, might each select a horse out of his stable for a race, and make a stretch over the B.C., by way of example ; and reassure their countrymen, that there are yet to be found, horses capable of going four *miles* as well as four *furlongs*.

The most interesting and exhilarating of all races, to those who really understand horse-racing, are

matches : and races with from three to five horses, over a long course ;—for such engagements call forth the owner's experience, observation, and judgment, and are better for ulterior engagements than private trials.

Races over all distances should be insisted on at Newmarket, as there is variety of ground enough for them.

The real promoters and supporters of this beneficial amusement are divisible into degrees. Royal munificence stands pre-eminent. Next in degree are those noblemen and gentlemen of estate and others, the great breeders of race-horses, who train and run their horses at a great expense to themselves, and to the improvement of the breed of horses generally. Such patrons deserve well of their country,—as do those gentlemen who keep race-horses, and run for public money, however small the amount, and to whom, winning the race affords more gratification than does the money.

*January 26, 1856.*

I. F. R.

## LETTER III.

---

SIR,

IN thanking you for inserting in your paper of the 30th of last month the further statement and letter, dated the 26th, remarking principally on the distances now in use for races at Newmarket, and on the sum of £3,000 so generously bestowed there in prizes :—the next step to be taken is towards showing how the deficiency might be remedied, and eleven new races over four miles be at once established without requiring any further grants or donations.

The ordinary amount of plates is well known throughout England as £50 ;—and, having been so for more than a century, may be called “time honoured.”

Now, in the spirit of fairness and encouragement to horses of *all qualities*, might not all such of the present donations which spring out of the £3,000, as are above £50 in amount (with the one exception of the £300 given on the Tuesday in the Second October Meeting) be levelled down to the other numerous fifties ;—which latter already form 31 out of the 44 donations of the Jockey Club ? If this were done, £550 out of the £3,000 would become an available

surplus, and would make 11 £50 plates, for races over the B.C., viz., two plates for each of the (now) two Spring meetings, one for the July meeting, and two for each of the three October meetings.

If this suggestion should be entertained and adopted, and the owners of race horses once assured that these 11 new £50 plates would be firmly established; there would be no difficulty in finding horses which possess those indispensable requisites—good legs and good lungs—ready at the starting-post.

There are people in the provinces of England, though they know little about practical horse-racing, who nevertheless have a regard, even to admiration, for a good race-horse :—this feeling may be said to be inherent in most Englishmen ; but their estimate of the animal is founded on the notion of its ability to carry the greatest weight—over the longest distance—in the shortest time ; and although this may be exclaimed against as an old-fashioned estimate, yet it is the right one ;—so much so, that a racer having finished his career, and having won, in addition to other races, some six or eight prizes over a four mile course, will be always highly valued in its neighbourhood ;—but so contrary to this is modern racing, that those very people view with little or no interest the present horse races ; but look on them (though 30 horses start) as little better than so many flashes in the pan :—brilliant, but powerless and ineffective : the winners of some of these races of *only half a mile*, though of full age, being claimed for £40 and even £25 !



Should a match (such as that between Hambletonian and Diamond) for 1,000 guineas over the Beacon course be ever again made, people from every county in England would travel to see that race alone.

If the proposed 11 plates were established—the prizes being thereby more equally bestowed—such an encouragement would assimilate with the broad basis of a *university*, holding out prizes for horses of all qualities and denominations, and enabling all to go up to Newmarket to get a degree.

I. F. R.

*February 25, 1856.*

## LETTER IV.

---

SIR,

WHILE thanking you for finding space in your paper of the 27th of February for the last letter forwarded ; I again trespass on the same matters, and by way of coming to a point—although it may be like the past century challenging the present—let imagination bring again to Newmarket, the celebrated racer Bajazet (son of the Godolphin Arabian), eight years old, ready at the starting post to run another match for fifty guineas, over six miles, with 12st. weight on his back ; and then let it be asked dispassionately, whether he would not have to look around in vain for a competitor who could keep him company all the way ? It is but fair to state, that this horse did not run till five years old, but ran and won to his tenth year inclusive. The only way to try whether the superior animal lived in those days or in these, would be to make a similar match, if two horses of the same age *could now be found* fit to start, and thereby clear up the doubt.

Passing on to another matter,—the importance attached to the qualities of the animals for the breeding stud. The owner of one of the most celebrated

studs, and who was living 50 years ago, in making selections and purchases, chose those for dams, which had established a good character for running a long distance, or as it is familiarly termed at Newmarket, “*over the course* ;”—the standard height of the mare was not insisted on, as being of little importance, if there was strength of make and constitution ; of which, running stoutly was considered the best practical proof.

In adverting to another matter—namely, private trials ; it must appear a bold suggestion to hint even at the discontinuance of them entirely at Newmarket. But as all races in public, are trials in the best atmosphere for the horse ; might not these be held sufficient,—if it were only to remove the temptation held out to stable underlings ? The professional betting man, and those who act on what is modestly termed *information*, ought gladly to accept this proposal as a very great boon ; for then by using their own eyes they could be satisfied beyond all doubt, and without paying for private information.

With regard to some of the most important racing engagements, when the matter is fully considered ;—how little judgment can, by any possibility, be exercised in engaging colts and fillies for the Derby, and its sister race, the Oaks, with any well-founded hope of winning. They are entered for these races when one year old, and nearly two whole years before the races are run. Now, what can be judged of them at this age, but by their shape and their frolics and caperings in the paddocks ? Out of the large num-

ber named for the Derby, being nearly 200, some in this long interval die—some fall lame—some prove not worth training—others are trained and run badly,—and the remainder which prove promising, and run well, make about one in ten of the original number, for the great Derby-day. Considering the heavy number of those who do not run, many of their owners, it is to be hoped, soon come to the sage conclusion that “happy is the man that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.” Now all these matters taken together, leave the winner of the Derby more like the winner of a prize in a lottery, than of a judiciously formed racing engagement. The multitude on Epsom Downs doubtless consider the winner as the very best horse in the country! but as the multitude are not philosophers, some better test than this approbation should be applied by those who ought to know better. Bringing away the first prize from a university is a great achievement for a youth; but judges look on it chiefly as a beginning or earnest for future exploits when the youth becomes a man; and it is to be regretted that the winners of the Derby leave off so soon, and do not run long enough to try their strength as horses when 6 or 7. Whether this proceeds from beginning their career too early, and thereby bringing on premature physical decay, or whether from incurable defects in the animal powers, leave a problem yet to be solved.

There is another view that may be taken of these two celebrated races:—that they are the *innocent*



causes of the vast betting system which brings down so much obloquy on these two races. The entries being in print, and before the public for nearly two years, afford ample opportunity for the growth of the betting-book: of which the owner, like the speculator in the funds, during this long interval, has only to watch the rise and fall of the favourites in the almost daily accounts which appear, to make himself *safe*.

The excessive betting on other races, where there are numerous entries, may be probably alleged as a reason why these *two* celebrated and popular races should not be put forth so prominently as the cause of betting on a large scale; and this is partly true and well founded: as other large races, where more start, equally increase betting just in the proportion to the numbers of horses,—every race becoming a nucleus for bets to encrust round. But as winning a Derby or Oaks brings so much renown to the breeder and owner, these two races should be allowed to remain intact.

The Legislature, seeing that it is quite impracticable to put a stop to betting—in-doors or out-of-doors—has of late dealt leniently with it, compared with former provisions against it; and had the *act* of 1853, “An Act for the Suppression of Betting-houses,” made it penal (as the *bill* did when brought in) for *any person* receiving a deposit for a bet, the mischief now so general would have immediately been suppressed. Whereas now, any individual not keeping a “betting-house” may receive deposits from

all the world on account of bets with impunity ; and until this is also made penal by a fresh enactment, *half* the mischief intended by the *bill* to be put down must remain,—working into and unsettling individuals in every grade of society who may be infected with a *speculative* turn.

Possibly the active member who first called for the *bill* will take this glaring defect in the act into his consideration.

The betting system hovers like a vampire over horse-races (which are now become feeble and attenuated)—corrupting their very *lifeblood*! Both require a cure. The latter (instead of being races for gambling purposes) might by an effort, be restored to their former vigour ; by horses doing the work of horses, and not that of colts,—by carrying higher weights over the present favourite distances,—by running longer distances with the present weights, by County, City, and Borough Members confining their donations to races over a long distance—by admitting fewer horses into racing engagements,—and lastly, by abolishing private trials, which must diminish betting in proportion.

The cure for the former—now a national malady—could in a great degree be effected by calling in the aid of the Legislature without delay, and subjecting every person who receives deposits, though he does not keep a betting-house, to the same penalties as those who do.

I. F. R.

March 27, 1856.

## LETTER V.

SIR,

AFTER thanking you for inserting in your paper of the 28th of March the last letter forwarded, and in furtherance of the matters remarked upon in that and former letters; a question may be fairly asked, whether taking colts into training to run at two years old is not gathering fruit before it is ripe; and which might be advantageously left out longer without any fear of being lost?

The race-courses in England are overdone with two-year-old races!

The highest standard for trying the real and valuable qualities of horses, was that of the Royal Plates with their former weights, where four-year-olds carried 10st. 4lbs.; five-year-olds 11st. 6lbs.; six, 12st.; and aged horses, 12st. 2lbs.; running four-mile heats in the majority of them.

By an injudicious interference, the distances and weights for these prizes (for which none but superior horses could run) were altered to meet the requirements of these indulgent times; and the consequence is, that *now* not half-a-dozen horses could be found to run for them under their former con-

ditions! There was also, at that time, scarcely a country race-course that had not four-mile races, with heats, even for £50 plates; but *now* with the exception of Newmarket, there are only *two* places where that distance is run, and these are Stamford and the Caledonian Hunt. As to two-year-olds running,—taking the winners of the July Stakes at Newmarket for ten years in succession;—two of these winners left off running at three years old—five at four years old—two at five years old—and but one (as if his powers of perseverance had been first proved by the *touchstone*) continued to run till eight years old. But of these ten winners, only one ever achieved a race of four miles:—so that with one exception, these celebrated two-year-old winners, all leave off at about the age when horses formerly began their career—in fact, being what is termed used-up and their vigour gone, before the period at which they should and might have been in their *natural* high force, if the virtue of patience had been exercised by their owners.

All these facts afford grounds for inferring—either that running at two years old is destructive of the animal powers—or that the race-horses of this day are degenerate from some cause unknown.

It is not enough to say, even if it could be established, that on an average they run as many years as formerly; for even if it were so, they cannot do the strong work formerly done.

A stranger coming to England to see our races, with a mind fully impressed from his childhood with



the superiority of English horses, which he had heard so often expatiated on with admiration,—on inquiring of one conversant with the pursuit, and being eager to see a race for one of the prizes given by the Sovereign for the encouragement of the breed of good horses; is informed that these races are not now what they were, and such as he had heard or read of,—in short that he may look in vain for a race between horses carrying the high weights he expected, and running probably three times, and possibly four times, over four miles! He must also be informed that there are two ancient and very celebrated honourable prizes at Newmarket, which may be run for annually—called “The Whip” and “The Cup,” over the longest course now used there; and which prizes are considered the crowning prizes—but that the winner of either must on being challenged, either run his horse with that of the challenger, or deliver up the prize to the latter. The stranger will, doubtless, feel some surprise on hearing that when challenges are made, these prizes are mostly delivered up to the challenger without the race being run. He will naturally inquire, What can be the causes of these changes? and cannot fail to be answered in a manner neither laudatory of the horses nor complimentary to the judgment of their owners.

Races for three-year-olds may be reasonable enough; but forcing two-year-olds is injustice to the animal—anticipating its half-developed powers—like killing the bird for the golden egg.

With regard to three-year-olds:—why not give even them, less clothing;—taking away their hoods and breast-clothes, and accustom them to longer canters as a rule: which they would then perform with double the life and alacrity, and four miles would be as familiar as two. The sweltering thick blankets used in training for a *one-mile* race, cause many a break-down; besides sacrificing the strength and powers of the young horse in the *dark*—where longer gallops, with less tailoring, would improve it in both wind and limb.

The bygone and modern racer are not the subjects of comparison—but of contrast. If a comparison be made of the latter, it must be with something that moves on another element;—and that is the clipper ship—so much in vogue just now with go-a-head traders—got up cheap for hasty traffic, and though remarkable for its quick sailing; is equally remarkable for its want of stoutness and durability! Again, running two-year-olds is gaining only a loss, so far as the animal is considered:—they will never become such horses to breed from as Benningbrough, Hambletonian, and some others of their time and stamp.

The patrons of those races known as Welter Stakes, might do much towards the restoration of the vigorous old style of running, should not the higher patrons of the pursuit take the matter up more heartily. To return to the old weights and distances for the Royal Plates would do still more, as a high example. The winners of such prizes appear

in these days as the stalwart warriors of old, when contrasted with the hop-skip-and-jump racing of the present day.

In conclusion, if the race-courses throughout England, which have of late been so much *contracted* (in more senses than one) as if to afford more circumference to the betting ring, were restored to their former lengths; the English race-horse, whose character has been disparaged by modern innovation, would have justice done to him, and might hold up his head again.

I. F. R.

*September* 18, 1856.

## LETTER VI.

SIR,

THANKING you for the fifth time, I crave your indulgence for the insertion of this sixth and finishing letter on *race horses past and present*.

In looking through the reports of races at Newmarket for the present year, it affords some sparks of hope that actual races over the long course are not quite given up,—there having been two over the Beacon course, which is in length beyond four miles ; \* one of which races was for the ancient *Cup*, for which there had not been a race for very many years.

The four-year-old colts and fillies which ran in these two races, must be ranked as the best for the year 1856, as there have been no races so trying or severe.

Now, what is wanted to perfect the pursuit, and to restore the lost standard, but more of such races throughout England ? When will as many as *seven* four-year-olds be seen running together over this course as in the last race of 1750 ?

\* In 1856 there were only *five* races of four miles throughout England and Scotland : in 1812 there were no less than *one hundred and twenty-one*, fifty-six of which were four mile *heats*.



It may be asked,—“Why all this ado about four miles—long distances—heats—and high weights, when all the world know that the times are changed, and the fashions in racing with them?”

The answer is, that full one-half of what were real *races over miles*, are now reduced to a *scamper over half-a-mile*; and that the modern *racer* is far inferior to the *running horse* of former days.

When Parliament, in 1747<sup>5</sup>, altered the Act of 1740—which regulated the weights to be carried—it was in full reliance on the stability of the weights and distances of the royal plates; which latter, the Legislature thought were sufficient to secure to the nation a breed of strong horses, beneficial to the country at large. And it was not until the last few years that these animals, valuable for their strength and stoutness, disappeared,—all through the injudicious reduction of those weights and distances! It was principally in the provinces or counties of England that the royal plates of 100 guineas were contested with so much untiring vigour by the horses of country gentlemen,—which horses, both losers and winners, were of more real value to the country than the winners of thousands of guineas over *one* mile.

Should it be asked,—what would be the most effectual—the most easy—and the most expeditious mode of restoring these qualities in the horse?—the answer would be,—to return to the former conditions and qualifications of the royal plates—excluding *three-*

year-olds. And to do all this, one word from *authority* would be sufficient.

There are now annually given no less than *thirty-four* royal plates, of 100 guineas each, in England and Scotland, as well as *sixteen* in Ireland. But these prizes, for the causes before-mentioned, give no encouragement to the breeding of strong horses, to which Parliament, in its wisdom, had paid so much regard. In fact, these donations now confer no *collateral* benefit on the country, and afford only *amusement*,—their double purpose being gone.

The Royal Plates, till lately, were races that brought renown to the horse and to its owner. Many of our older sportsmen must well remember the eager interest taken by the country people in the horse that won what was then familiarly termed “The King’s Hundred,” as being the strong racer that could run four mile heats with the weight of a full-sized man on his back.

Although these meritorious horses are not now to be found—their names, nevertheless, are searched for, and are proudly mentioned in the modern race-horse’s genealogy, when his pedigree is set up.

The Royal Plates are not sufficiently honoured, nor even appreciated, by the public,—probably from being so widely dispersed throughout the kingdom, and not sufficiently known to the public generally. Another reason may be, from their being paid in specie, and without any distinctive mark attached.

Should these prizes be restored to their former and

original purpose, the winners of them would rise again in estimation and value,—and while the £100 went towards the expenses of training, the remaining five, it is quite needless to say, would be gladly and, it is hoped, deservedly received in the shape of a small piece of silver plate, or even a still smaller gold medal, and be considered worthy of having the exploit engraved on it,—sufficient particulars for which could be readily obtained from the certificate of the Lord-Lieutenant of the county.

Such tokens would be gratifying and encouraging to the horse's owner, as well as pleasing to the members of his family, his friends, and his household.

I. F. R.

*November 26, 1856.*

